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SUBJECT: TOGO/FRENCH MOD: AMBASSADOR DUNN'S OCTOBER 24
CONSULTATIONS

Classified By: Acting DCM Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: U.S. Ambassador to Togo David Dunn met with French Ministry of Defense officials on August 24. The discussion focused on Togo's military and how to decrease its involvement in internal security affairs, which should be handled by the police and gendarmerie. However, defining a strictly military role for the army and assigning responsibility for internal security to the police and gendarmerie were not simple matters, given the leading role the army had played in Togo's politics and the relatively limited capabilities of the police and gendarmerie. There was general agreement that Faure was proving to be a better leader than his father had been, with the June 2007 legislative elections an important indicator of the course Togo would take. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) The French Defense Ministry's Strategic Affairs Delegation hosted visiting U.S. Ambassador to Togo David Dunn for discussions on August 24. Colonel Denis Opplert (Deputy Director for Regional Affairs-Africa), Jerome Spinoza (Charge de Mission for Sub-Saharan Africa), and Major Michel Raoult (Gendarmerie, West Africa Desk Officer, French Joint Staff Directorate of International Relations) attended the meeting, along with Embassy Assistant Army Attache and Africa Watcher.

13. (C) After opening pleasantries, Ambassador Dunn provided a quick overview of Togo. Faure was making an effort to reform but was hampered by "old guard" members of his entourage. Retired military officers continued to have influence. That said, the army and government seemed open to concepts of good governance. Ambassador Dunn noted the importance of French forces in Togo as support for French forces in Cote d'Ivoire and the value of Lome airport as a rear base for French transport aircraft operating in Cote d'Ivoire. Spinoza added that French forces in Togo could also support evacuations that might take place in the broader region.

14. (C) Major Raoult agreed on the important role played by Togo's army. All agreed that the army had been playing too large a role in providing internal security. The army should perform military tasks and leave international security to an enhanced police or gendarmerie presence. Spinoza remarked that the June legislative elections would be a key test -- would the army remain in its barracks or take to the streets? Ambassador Dunn noted that the Global Political Agreement of August 20 called for a "traditional" role for the army and he

said that the Togolese had indicated their desire to diversify the military and had requested assistance/advice on how to do so.

15. (C) Opplert commented that one problem was the fact that it was not easy identifying strictly "military" roles for Togo's army, given Togo's actual military security concerns. Togo's army was, in per capita terms, already bigger than the armies of most other West African countries. Ambassador Dunn and his French interlocutors expressed misgivings about adapting the military to civilian tasks, and did not want to see the military involved in the ports and customs services, for example. Raoult identified one problem on the civilian side -- the quite irregular and ineffective police recruiting system. He described police personnel and recruiting as severely deficient. Spinoza said that ethnic issues and the lack of diversity among ethnic groups were among the serious problems, with the Kabye overrepresented in the military and police. Ambassador Dunn commented on the stereotypes depicting northerners as "military" in nature and southerners as "non-military." Ambassador Dunn described UFC leader Gilchrist Olympio's advice to reform the military but to avoid going "too fast." Togo's ethnic issues were real, but nowhere near the level as in places such as Burundi, Ambassador Dunn observed. Fortunately, the Togolese people had a strong sense of "Togolese" identity that could be used as a unifying force.

16. (C) Spinoza commented on the differences between Faure and Eyadema, noting that the son was much better educated, worldly, and seemingly more open minded than his father had been. Spinoza believed that Faure was a more credible leader than Olympio. Ambassador Dunn believed that Faure sought to change and advance Togo but that he needed and was seeking

help from the international community, from which Togo had been isolated for quite some time. The French observed that Eyadema, for better or worse, had been a strong leader. Faure was coming into power on a different basis and would rule differently, which provided opportunities for progress. On the positive side, Ambassador Dunn commented that Togo's involvement in drug trafficking seemed to decrease with Faure's arrival, although Spinoza reminded that there was evidence indicating that the broader Gnassingbe clan was engaged in many questionable activities.

17. (C) After Spinoza mentioned China, Ambassador Dunn described China's growing presence in Togo and across Africa. He noted Chinese engagement in the sugar and transportation industries, with a leading role in Togo's thriving motor scooter sector. Spinoza said that Togo-PRC diplomacy was active, with Faure already having visited China and military exchanges now taking place.

18. (C) When asked about U.S. interest in the Gulf of Guinea, Ambassador Dunn discussed the upcoming conference on that topic and Togo's likely participation. Spinoza indicated that France would attend the conference and wanted to work with the U.S. on issues concerning the Gulf.

19. (C) The French expressed concern about Nigeria, noting ties between Nigerian and Togolese criminal groups. Ambassador Dunn said that in his view most Togolese were interested more in immediate neighbors Ghana and Benin and tended to blame Nigerian nationals for many of Togo's social problems. The French were concerned about Nigeria's weight and effect on the region. The debate over allowing President Obasanjo had a destabilizing potential. Referring to Niger as "Nigeria's 37th province," the French said that its problems were social and political, and not military. Ambassador Dunn said that Togo's relations with its other neighbors (Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso) were relatively good. The French expressed concern about Cote d'Ivoire's Gbagbo and his apparent attempt to woo Faure into supporting him.

110. (U) Ambassador Dunn has cleared this message.
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